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By - Aiken, James
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This report investigated whether withdrawees and continuers differed significantly (1) in occupational and educational status of parents, stated goals, and over-all GPA, or (2) on the basis of personal college experiences. A 2-part questionnaire, sent to 150 randomly selected entering freshmen, produced a return of 60%: 46 dropouts and 44 continuers. In the first part, they listed age, present occupation, parents' occupation, job goals, future plans, and marital status. (GPA's were obtained from the registrar) In section two, on a 5-point scale, they rated 40 items related to college experiences. No significant demographic differences were noted that would help to predict withdrawal. Other findings included: (1) dropouts tended to be older, more were married, and more planned to continue working, while the continuers wanted only to complete their education; (2) there was a significant difference in the GPA's of the two groups, even though the literature reports that they have the same academic ability; (3) the groups were alike in vocational goals and in parents' education and work status; (4) about the same number were undecided on their future; (5) both groups held generally favorable feelings about teachers and counselors; and (6) the usual reasons for attrition (illness, financial need, marriage, lack of interest, etc) did not emerge in this report. The author hopes that future studies will help the college to differentiate between those who merely need time off from college and those whose needs are not being met. (HH)

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A COMPARISON OF JUNIOR COLLEGE WITHDRAWEES

James Aiken
University of Missouri

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The college dropout is an ever increasing problem, both in numbers and in designing programs to benefit them. Statistics concerning the rate of attrition range as low as 40% to a high of 80% over a four-year period. Some authorities (Thornton, 1965) believe that at least 50% of those who dropout will eventually return to obtain a degree. This, however, should not excuse the problem for even if this is true, it certainly is an inefficient method of obtaining an education.

The community junior college proposes to offer an individualized and broad educational curriculum. This philosophy would seem to place the junior college in a better position to lessen the attrition rates for higher education. There are, however, indications that the attrition rates are remaining at about the same level (Orange Coast Junior College, 1965). This leads us to believe that colleges have yet to meet the needs of many of its dropout students.

Colleges have aimed their services at certain areas that they believe cause attrition. Specifically, these areas are academics, health, finances, and personal adjustment (Iffert, 1958, 1965; Summerskill, 1962). Some authorities do cite that these reasons for withdrawal may not be the real reasons, but a cover-up to aid in the termination processes of the colleges (Marsh, 1966; Koelsche, 1956; Dalrymple, 1967).

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It may be that in our zealous efforts to administer questionnaires and to interview the prospective dropout that we may be heading in the wrong direction. The majority of the literature tends to deal with dropouts as an individual group without comparing them to other groups (Smith, 1967). Several writers have tried to look at the dropout in comparison, not with his own group, but with the continuers in college (Goetz, 1967; Williams, 1967; Marks, 1967). Many of these writers have found that there is not any particular characteristic which would identify them as being different from other students continuing in college (Nichols and Stafford, 1966; Goetz, 1967).

The present report represents an attempt to explore some demographic differences between the junior college dropout and the junior college continuer. In addition to a student characteristics analysis, a questionnaire was administered that investigated students' concerns toward the college relating to its general facilities and services and some personal events experienced during their period of attendance. The questions that this report attempts to answer are:

1. Are there significant differences between the withdrawee and the continuer regarding the occupational and educational levels of the mother and the father, the stated future goals upon entrance, and over-all grade point averages?

2. Are there differences between the withdrawees and the continuers regarding certain conditions that may have been experienced while attending college?

METHOD

A questionnaire was sent to 150 randomly selected members of the 1966 first trimester entering freshman class at St. Johns River Junior College in Palatka, Florida. A return of 60% was obtained - 44 continuers and 46 withdrawees.

Group 1, the withdrawee, was any full-time, non-transfer student who entered in the Fall trimester of 1966, but had withdrawn voluntarily from college and was not currently enrolled at St. Johns.

Group 2, the continuer, was defined as any full-time, non-transfer student who had not interrupted his academic career from enrollment in the Fall trimester of 1966 through the Winter trimester of 1967 except for Summer sessions.

In an effort to determine if there were differences between students' orientations toward continuance and withdrawal, the questionnaire was composed of items generally considered to be related to attrition. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. In the first part, the student was asked to furnish the following information: age, present occupation, occupation of father and mother, vocational goals upon entrance, future plans, and marital status. Students' individual grade point averages for each trimester attended was obtained from the registrar. Section two of the questionnaire consisted of 40 statements related to college experiences which called for a rating on a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It was assumed that the student responded to each item to the degree that it affected him according to the scale provided.

The stated vocational goals upon entrance and the educational

and occupational levels of the mothers and fathers were subjected to Chi square analysis. The .05 level was considered to be significant for these variables. A t-test of independent samples was used to test the significance of the differences found between the grade point averages. The level of significance was considered to be .05 for the t-test. Other demographic data and the responses to the items on the second section are related as percentages.

RESULTS

Part I: A comparison of age ranges for both groups revealed that 43.4% of the withdrawees were between the ages of 20-23. The continuer had 27.2% in this age range and the remainder of this group were found to be younger (72.7%) than the dropouts.

Table 1 presents the Chi square analysis of the stated vocational goals upon entrance. There were no significant differences found in the categories tested for either Group 1 or Group 2.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 2 presents results of the Chi square analysis of the educational and occupational levels for both the mothers and the fathers for the groups tested. No significant differences were found on any of the variables tested.

Insert Table 2 about here

The mean grade point average (GPA) obtained for the continuers was 2.45 (4.0= A, 3.0=B, 2.0=C) with a standard deviation of .61. For the withdrawees the GPA was 1.92 with a

standard deviation of .66. This difference is significant by a t-test of independent samples. The t value was 3.92. Since the withdrawee voluntarily withdrew from school for his own reasons it is possible that he left because of poor grades.

Other information areas investigated were marital status and stated future plans. Within the withdrawee group 67% were single and 33% were married. Within the continuer group 93% were single and 7% were married. The future plans for Group 1 showed 68% were planning to complete their education either for an associate's or a bachelor's degree at some later date and 30% planned to continue work and not return to school. Group 2 showed 86% planned to finish their education and 14% planned to enter the armed services or not to finish their education.

All of Group 2 were full-time students at St. Johns. The students in Group 1 were either working or had transferred to another college. It was found for Group 1 that 35% of the withdrawees had returned to school either as part-time or full-time students. Other work categories found for Group 1 were employees (civil service, sales, armed services) 22%, skilled labor 13%, housewife 20%, and no occupation 9%.

Limitations: It is possible that with a larger sample more discrete categories of occupational and educational levels would produce significant differences. St. Johns' students are fairly homogeneous in that the school is located in a rural area rather than in a heterogeneous urban setting.

Many students in Group 1 responded to the item concerning future goals by stating that they wanted to "complete" their education. The level of completion was not stated.

Part II: This part of the questionnaire asked the student to respond to a selection of items generally considered as factors related to attrition. They were asked to rate each item to the degree it affected them on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Table 3 shows by percentages the response distribution for each group for a selected group of items.

Insert Table 3 about here

The following were items in the questionnaire that represented common reasons found in the literature that were attributed to the dropout phenomena.

The college provides good facilities pertaining to your major field. More of the withdrawees responded positively (58.6%) than did the continuers (36.3%). The withdrawees disagreed more strongly (21.7%) than did the continuers (6.8%).

Teachers are enthusiastic when they teach class. This item did not differentiate between the two groups in terms of dropping out. More of the continuers disagreed (22.7%) than did the withdrawees (13.3%).

The college emphasizes intellectual and cultural activities outside the classroom. In Group 1 17.4% marked disagree to strongly disagree, while in Group 2 69.0% rated this item in the same categories. More continuers disagreed than did the withdrawees.

The college offers a full program in my major. Group 1 and 2 tended to rate this item from strongly agree to agree.

A higher percentage of Group 1 agreed than did Group 2.

Your family experienced financial problems while you attended college. Within the withdrawee group 68.9% disagreed with this statement, while only 40.9% of the continuers disagreed. More continuers agreed than did the withdrawees.

You experienced financial difficulties while attending college. Within Group 1 52.2% rated this item disagree to strongly disagree. Group 2 found 34.1% disagreeing that financial difficulties affected their college experience.

You were married while attending college. Both groups disagreed that marriage affected them while at college. More of the continuers rated this item in the indifferent catagory.

You were lonesome and/or unhappy while attending colleg . Group 1 had 73.9% disagreeing with this statement. More of the continuers agreed with the statement.

You experienced illness while attending school. Both groups disagreed with this statement, 69.6% for Group 1 to 52.3% for Group 2.

You were needed at home while attending college. Both groups disagreed with this statement. Over-all the ratings did not differentiate between the two groups.

You were discouraged by low grades. In Group 1 only 34.7% agreed with the item, while 29.0% of the continuers agreed that they were discouraged by low grades. Both groups tended to disagree with the statement.

You lacked interest in your studies while attending college. Both groups disagreed that they lacked interest. Iffert (1958)

found this to be a reason for attrition, but the results found here did not support his finding.

There were disrupting conflicts at home while attending college. More withdrawees disagreed (71.8%) than the continuers (52.3%). Group 2 agreed with the statement 38.6%, while 22.9% of Group 1 agreed.

You wished you could leave college. More of the withdrawees agreed than did the continuers on this item, however, both groups tended to disagree.

The services of my faculty advisor were good. Both groups agreed with this statement. In the disagree categories both groups were about evenly split, Group 1 21.7% and Group 2 25.0%.

Counselors are readily available to help with personal problems. Both groups agreed with this item. For Group 1 none of the responses fell in the disagree category, while 4.3% strongly disagreed.

Limitations: Due to an element of ambiguity within the directions for Part II, it was felt that the responses given may not be answering the original intent of the questionnaire. The student was asked to respond to each item as it affected him. The researcher had intended to measure the strength of the attitudes held by the student. It was assumed that if the student responded by rating the item on the provided scale that he was indeed rating his attitude towards the item.

On the original questionnaire 40 items were used. Due to the above limitation the researcher has reduced the reported items to sixteen. The items reported are the most common reasons stated in the literature (Goetz, 1967) for the causes of attrition.

DISCUSSION

The data indicate that in comparing demographic characteristics of withdrawees and continuers almost no significant differences that would contribute to the prediction of withdrawal were found. The two groups were more alike than they were different.

The withdrawees tended to be older and more of them were married. More of the withdrawees stated that they planned to continue in the world of work. This group because they are older and have more responsibilities may be more flexible in terms of what they expect to accomplish in life. The continuer tended to see only one goal: to complete a college education.

A significant difference was found in the average GPA between the withdrawees and the continuers. It is possible that the withdrawees left school because of failing experiences, and those that continued did so because of more positive reinforcement. The literature (Marks, 1967) reports that withdrawees have the same academic ability as do the continuers. If the withdrawees are like the continuers, it may be possible that because of our grading and evaluation practices that we are forcing good ability students out of college.

The data indicates that for the groups tested they were alike in terms of vocational goals upon entrance, educational levels of both mothers and fathers, and occupational levels of both mothers and fathers. The American Education magazine (1967) reported that withdrawees generally come from families with less than a high school education. This study did not support this fact for these junior college students. Summerskill (1962) reports that research findings concerning educational and occupational

levels affecting withdrawal is equivocal.

Counselors often feel that being undecided about future goals may contribute to attrition. This study found 32.6% of the withdrawees and 31.8% of the continuers responded "undecided" concerning future goals. The difference was not significant. It may be possible that if at the end of two years the student is still undecided, that attrition may be more predictable. The questionnaire for this study was administered approximately two years after the initial entrance. None of the participants indicated that they were "undecided" about future goals at the time the questionnaire was administered. This does not presume that some of these students will not withdraw, but is does indicate that from the students' responses we have difficulty predicting withdrawal.

In comparing the ratings of the withdrawees and the continuers to various aspects of campus life, both groups expressed positive feelings toward teachers, faculty advisors, and counselors. The continuers gave more negative ratings than did withdrawees. This might be explained by the fact that the longer the students stay in a college program the more critical they become (Goetz, 1967).

Other reasons most often stated in the literature for attrition, such as illness, financial need (family or self), needed at home, marriage, lack of interest, and unhappiness, were not supported by this report. The continuers tended to agree that many of these problems affected them while in college, while the withdrawees tended to disagree.

The finding that the withdrawee is more like the continuer poses many questions for future research. A large percentage (69.8%) of the withdrawees plan to return to school, indeed, 34.8% had already returned. Perhaps in past studies the withdrawees were able to save face by attributing their withdrawal to various factors presented by the researcher. It is also possible that the withdrawee was unaware of the real reasons for his leaving school. The important point is that we have yet to uncover the reasons causing attrition.

It may be possible that students need to drop out for a year or so to "find themselves" (Samenow, 1967). The problem then becomes how to allow the withdrawee to drop in and out at will. Perhaps the junior college more than ever will find its job to be that of giving students a trial college experience.

It is hoped that as we become more sophisticated in our knowledge of human behavior and reinforcers that we can better be able to differentiate between those that need to take time off from college and those whose needs are not being met at college. We need more creative types of curriculums, counseling programs, and research to discover the motivational patterns that lead to the causes for attrition, and more importantly in what way does the college act as a catalyst or a cause of attrition.

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TABLE 1

Observed and Expected Frequencies, and Chi Squares for Vocational Goals Upon Entrance

Categories	Group 1		Group 2		X^2	df
	O	E	O	E		
Associate's degree	7	6.13	5	5.86		
Bachelor's degree	23	24.53	25	23.46		
Undecided	16	15.33	14	14.66	.52	2

TABLE 2

Observed and Expected Frequences, and Chi Squares for Educational and Occupational Levels of the Parents

		Group 1		Group 2			
		O	E	O	E	X^2	df
Father's Education	Below 12th	9	8.69	8	8.30		
	12th	18	18.92	19	18.00		
	13th-14th	10	9.20	8	8.79		
	15th- +	8	8.18	8	7.81	.23	3
Mother's Education	Below 12th	5	6.00	7	6.00		
	12th	25	24.00	23	24.00		
	13th-14th	9	8.50	8	8.50		
	15th- +	5	5.50	6	5.50	.56	3
Father's Occupation	Professional & Managerial	11	8.44	9	7.88		
	Employee (Civil Ser.,sales, armed ser.)	17	12.23	12	11.44		
	Blue collar (skil- led worker)	7	7.13	10	6.70		
	Other: retired, sports, journalist	6	5.58	7	5.12		
	Deceased	5	4.22	5	3.94	5.60	4
Mother's Occupation	Professional & Managerial	6	7.41	9	7.93		
	Employee (Civil Ser., sales, sec., teacher's aid)	14	12.85	12	13.14		
	Other: Housewife	23	22.73	23	23.26	.62	2

TABLE 3

Comparison by Percentages for Questionnaire Items

Items	Gr.	S.A.	Agree	Indif.	Disagree	S.D.
1. Good facilities for major field.	1	13.6	45.6	23.9	15.2	21.7
	2	4.5	31.8	27.3	29.5	6.8
2. Teachers were enthusiastic.	1	8.9	57.8	20.0	13.3	0
	2	6.9	45.4	22.7	20.4	2.3
3. College emphasizes activities outside of the classroom.	1	2.2	60.9	19.6	15.2	2.2
	2	2.3	27.3	20.4	36.4	13.6
4. College offers a full program in major.	1	11.1	46.7	13.3	26.7	2.2
	2	6.8	36.4	13.6	20.5	18.2
5. Financial problems (family).	1	4.4	8.9	17.8	51.1	17.8
	2	11.4	20.4	27.3	31.8	9.1
6. Financial problems (self).	1	6.7	20.0	11.1	44.4	17.8
	2	11.3	31.8	22.7	25.0	9.1
7. Married while in college.	1	0	2.2	6.5	43.5	47.8
	2	0	6.8	13.6	40.9	36.5
8. Lonesome and/or unhappy.	1	6.5	10.9	8.7	39.1	34.8
	2	9.1	22.7	15.9	29.5	22.7
9. Illness (self).	1	4.3	6.5	19.6	50.0	19.6
	2	4.5	13.6	29.5	36.4	15.9
10. Needed at home.	1	4.4	6.7	15.6	53.3	20.0
	2	4.5	11.4	18.7	45.4	20.4
11. Discouraged by low grades.	1	8.7	26.1	13.0	32.6	19.6
	2	13.6	15.4	13.4	52.3	11.4
12. Lacked interest in studies.	1	6.7	17.8	13.3	37.8	24.4
	2	2.3	25.0	11.4	40.9	20.4
13. Disruptive conflicts at home.	1	2.2	21.7	4.3	52.2	19.6
	2	15.9	22.7	9.1	36.4	15.9
14. Wished you could leave college(return later).	1	17.1	21.9	19.5	29.3	12.2
	2	11.4	20.4	11.4	40.9	15.9
15. Services of faculty advisor were good.	1	21.7	41.3	15.2	13.0	8.7
		13.6	45.4	15.9	15.9	9.1
16. Counselors readily available.	1	23.9	47.8	23.9	0	4.3
	2	21.7	58.7	8.7	6.2	4.3